/xiii/ Introduction

101 The Bambara tribes which form part of the Mandé group are at
131 present spread out in French Sudan from the 11th to the 14th degrees latitude north and from the 7th to the 11th degrees longitude west. Three groups which have settled respectively in the circle of Issa Ber, in Kaarta, and in the circle of Odienné are noticeably separated from the central group which occupies the shores of the Niger around Bamako and Ségou.

105 The Bambara live in small villages in the savanna; they practice primarily agriculture (millet, digitaria /Fonio/, rice, maize, etc.), but also herding and gardening. The shore dwellers of the Niger are fishermen and live in symbiotie relationships with the Bozo who taught them fishing techniques and who are generally recognized as the first inhabitants of these regions.

173 The Bambara state that they came from Mandé. This region, where the successive capitals of the ancient kingdom of Mali were situated, has long attracted the attention of research workers (1).

1. See J. Vidal, Au sujet de l'emplacement du Mali (ou Melli /on the subject of the Mali site/), pp. 251-268; Le véritable emplacement du Mali /The true site of the Mali/, pp. 606-619. This author designates by Mali I to IV the four villages of Dyélibakoro, Niani, Maninkoura, and Kangaba, which had been successively the royal city. See also Ch. Monteil, Les Empires du Mali /The empires of Mali/, p. 13.

Moreover, it is "the center from which radiated forty-four tribes at present spread out in the area between the Atlantic coast, the Senegal, and the Niger, or to Dahomey" (2). The region indicated above also

2. See D. Zahan. Aperçu sur la pensée théogonique des Dogon /Survey of theogonic thought of the Dogon/, pp. 113-133. This author gives the name of the tribes originating

105 Identification

The Bambara (Bamana, Banmana) belong to the Mandingo branch of the Niger-Congo linguistic stock. They numbered 830,000 in 1933, but Urvoy (1942) estimates them at 1,200,000. Paques (1954) gives their number as about 1,000,000, but this figure excludes about 125,000 mixed-blood Fulani-Bambara, 15,000 Somono fishermen, and perhaps other special groups. Despite centuries of contact with Islam, the Bambara have remained almost exclusively pagan. Delafosse (1912) reported only 30,000 Moslems, mainly members of the Somono fishing caste, and Urvoy (1942) states that Moslems then numbered fewer than 100,000. The Bambara were subject to the old empire of Ghana and then to the Malinke empire of Mali (Melli). They gained their independence about 1670, when the Bambara kingdoms of Segou and Kaarta inherited the remnants of the Malinke state. These native kingdoms, in turn, fell before the expansion of the Tukulor around 1854-61.

Basic Economy

Primarily agricultural, with some irrigation and use of manure. The staple is "small millet" (Pennisetum spicatum; Paques calls it P. typhoideum). Next in importance are maize and sorghum (Andropogon sorghum and A. saccharus; Paques reports Sorghum vulgare and saccharine sorghum). Also of considerable importance are rice (both the African Oryza glaberrima and the Asiatic O. sativa), wheat (still in the experimental stage), fonio (Digitaria exilis and D. iburna; probably Bazin's "eleusine" is the same), bananas, manioc (Manihot dulcis), yams, and earth peas. Lesser crops include peppers, tomatoes, onions, squash, melons (Citrullus sp.), sesame (Sesamum indicum), beans (Phaseolus sp. and Vigna catjang), okra (Hibiscus esculentus or Abelmoschus esculentus), roselle (Hibiscus sabdariffa), peanuts (introduced from America in the 18th century), sweet potatoes, eggplant, peas, potatoes (since 1941), and gourds. Fruit trees include mangoes, papayas, oranges, limes. Textile crops include cotton, Hibiscus cannabinus, and recently sisal and kapok.

105 There is considerable gathering of the fruits of Bassia parkei (for shea butter), Parkia biglobosa (for flour), baobab (Adensonia digitata), Kola (Sterculia acuminata), Corchorus, Cenchrus, Cassia, tamarind, Eriodendron anfructuosum, and Khaya senegalensis. Cattle are kept in fair numbers (milk and butter used), but apparently almost exclusively by Fulani. There are numerous goats, sheep, dogs (eaten), and chickens, and a few donkeys, horses, and pigs. Bees are kept. There is considerable fishing, especially by the Somono, and some hunting. Trade is important, and is largely in the hands of Moslem Marka. There are markets.

Sex Division of Labor

The men hunt, fish (though women fish in shallow water), clear land, plant crops, hoe (with some assistance from the women), and in general do the bulk of the agricultural work. The women, however, cultivate gardens, work in irrigated cotton, rice, and onion fields, and do most of the harvesting. They also gather (but men gather honey) and (according to Aubert and Paques) tend and milk cows (but Labouret says men do animal husbandry). Women care for poultry.

Property

Land ownership is invested in the local "chef de la terre" but is held in usufruct, without right of sale, in part by individuals and in part collectively by extended families. The latter also have collective property in houses, trees, livestock, and slaves. Inheritance is patrilineal. Property descends to younger brothers in order of age, then to half-brothers by the same father in order of age, then to the head of the extended family for private property but to ElSo for family property. Monteil, contra Aubert and Ortoli, says that family property descends undivided to ElSo, is divided among daughters in default of sons, and goes to male collaterals in the absence of children.

Social Stratification

Bambara society is stratified into a class of warrior

105 nobles (including royalty), free commoners, slaves, and despised endogamous castes. The latter include smiths, tanners, woodworkers, hunters, fishermen (the Somono), and, lowest of all, "griots" (bards, musicians, and family archivists). Slave status is acquired by capture in war or enslavement for crime. The children of slaves are slaves, but if the father is free both the slave woman and her child become free.

Marriage

Marriages are arranged by the heads of extended families through an intermediary. Girls are betrothed in infancy. A bride-price is customary; it is paid by the head of the groom's patri-family to the head of the bride's family. It consists of 30,000 to 40,000 cowries (Gallieni), of eight cattle (Aubert), of goods including livestock and also of premarital agricultural bride-service (Paques). Marriage by exchange of women between two families is also quite common, being normally effected by the collusive abduction of one woman and the gift of the other in composition; in exchange marriages the bride-price is foregone, but ceremonial gifts are retained. Paques reports that a MoBr owes his SiSo a wife, normally giving the latter one of his own sister's daughters (cross-cousin marriage); in return the nephew owes him agricultural labor.

There is general, preferential, and exclusively non-sororal polygyny. The first wife is chief wife. Each co-wife has her separate quarters, and the Hu rotates. Secondary unions are preferential with ElBrWi and WiSi (only if Wi is dead), allowed with FaWi, FaBrWi, but forbidden with YoBrWi, SoWi, and WiDa.

Family

The residential unit is a patrilocal extended family (up to 80 or more members), occupying a compound. Each has a patriarchal head (fa), who administers the family property, directs collective agricultural work (about two days a week), and adjudicates disputes. He is assisted by a council of family elders, and is succeeded by his next younger classificatory Br, then his eldest So or BrSo.

105 Residence

Residence is patrilocal--in the extended family compound of HuFa. The heir to the headship of a patrifamily moves into the domicile of his predecessor.

Kin Groups and Exogamy

There is a definite tendency toward local endogamy. Paques reports that cross-cousin marriage, especially with MoBrDa, is allowed or even preferential in some regions, forbidden in others. Aubert says marriage is forbidden with either maternal or paternal kin. Ortoli states that descent from a remembered common ancestor is a bar to marriage.

There are patronymic patri-sibs with totemic taboos, which are divided into lineages. Most sources state that the sibs are agamous, but Ortoli reports "clan" exogamy, by which he possibly means lineage exogamy. The core of each extended family is a minor patri-lineage.

Kinship Terminology (mainly from Paques, A from Aubert, K from Koelle)

Fa--fa. Mo, FaWi--ba (Paques also ma, na). Ch--dé, denn (A), denge (K). Da--dem-muso (K). ElBr--kɔrɔ, koro (A). YoBr--doro (PK), doko (A). ElSi--koro-musso (A), nkoro-muso (K). YoSi--doko-musso (A), ndoro-muso (K). Wi--muso. Hu--t'ɛ, k'ɛ. FaBr--benoro. MoBr--ben-nkɛ, bénke (A). FaSi--ntene, tene-musso (A), bingi-musu (P). MoSi--ba-ko. Parallel nieces and nephews called "child." SiCh (m.s.)--be-ni, bare-ndi. GrFa--mokɔ, m'ke (A). GrMo--mo-muso.

Sibling terms extended to parallel cousins. Cross-cousin--Kalame, banindin (given by Aubert for "maternal cousin" as opposed to sibling terms for "paternal cousin").

Settlement Pattern

The Bambara live in compact villages and towns, usually composed of several slightly separated quarters, each surrounded by a mud wall. Two house types are reported: (1) round huts with cylindrical brick walls and conical

105 thatched roofs, and (2) rectangular houses with parapeted brick walls, flat terrace earth roofs supported by logs, and an interior court. Delafosse says the two occur concurrently, Arcin that the former occurs in the S, the latter in the N, Bazin that the former occurs only in contact with the Malinke, and other tribes with cone-cylinder dwellings, Urvoy that the former prevails in the W (S and SE of the Kagoro) but that the rectangular type with terrace roof is the usual Bambara type.

Community Organization

Patri-families (see Family) are localized as minor patrilineages. The quarters (see Settlement Pattern) are possibly localized lineages. Paques indicates that villages result from the growth and fission of patri-families, and that through a similar process districts of patrilineally related villages arise from one village. This suggests patrilocal clan-communities. Boys are circumcised and girls excised (clitoridectomy) shortly after puberty. Prior to this each sex is organized into age-grades (approximately infancy to 6, 6 to 10, and 10 to 15), membership in which endures for life. Each age-set has a head and other officials, and acts as a unit in collective work and festivals. Prior to initiation, boys and girls are paired off in pseudo-marriages (sex relations forbidden), and through this and collective labor a substantial degree of education and socialization are achieved.

Local Government

Each village has a headman (dugutigi), who is a "chef de la terre" or priest-chief, and is descendant of the original founders of the village. He adjudicates disputes assisted by a council of elders composed of the heads of quarters and extended families. He administers the land of the village, communes with the ancestors, and sacrifices at a special shrine which symbolizes the unity of the community. He is succeeded by his YoBr, then ElSo.

105 State

Villages are organized into districts under a district chief (fama), who is a member of the dominant "family" in the district; he is succeeded by his YoBr, then ElSo or BrSo. He is assisted by a "council of notables". Like a local headman, he represents the land and ancestors in a religious sense. He also dispenses justice, directs public works, and commands in war. He receives half of all war booty, a share in all wild and domestic animals killed, all gold and ivory, and fees from markets, pasturage, and ferrying. Recently there has been no political organization above the district level, but formerly, during the dominance of the great states of Segou and Kaarta, districts were grouped for administrative purposes into provinces headed by appointive chiefs (often sons of the ruler). The head of these states maintained a court and capital, and like village and district chiefs was believed to mediate with the supernatural.

Warfare

Each district chief has an army, used primarily for plundering and slave raiding. At periods in their history the Bambara have waged wars of conquest.

Bibliography

Aubert, A. Coutume Bambara. Publications du Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, ser. A, IX, 1-126. 1939. (A fair amount of data on the Bambara of Bougouni).

Bazin, H. Les Bambara et leur langue. Anthropos, I, 681-694. 1906. (A modest amount of information).

Brun, J. Le totémisme chez quelques peuples du Soudan Occidental. Anthropos, V, 844-869. 1910. (A very few items).

Delafosse, M. Haut-Sénegal-Niger. 3 vols. Paris, 1912. (A very modest amount of information).

Gallieni. Mission dans le Haut-Niger et a Ségou. Bulletin de la Société de Géographie, ser. 7, 565-631. 1883. (A few items).

Henry, J. Les Bambara. Münster, 1910. (A modest amount of information).

105 Koelle, S. W. Polyglotta Africana. London, 1854. (A few kin terms only).

Le Barbier, L. Les Bambaras. Paris, 1920. (Not consulted).

Monteil, C. Les Bambara de Ségou et du Kaarta. Paris, 1924. (Probably the standard monograph, but not in Yale Library and hence not consulted; extensively cited, however, by Paques).

___ Djenné. Paris, 1932. (A few items).

Ortoli, J. Coutume Bambara. Publications du Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, ser. AIX,127-159. 1939. (A fair amount of information).

Paques, H. Les Bambara. Paris, 1954. (A very good secondary summary).

Urvoy, Y. Petit atlas ethno-démographique du Soudan. Paris, 1942. (A very few items).

105 Identification

The Kagoro (Bagane) belong to the Mandingo branch of the Niger-Congo linguistic stock. They number about 21,000, of whom only 6,000 are Moslem. They speak Bambara and are said to be a mixture of Bambara and Fulani. Paques reports 27,000 in 1950. Lavergne du Tressan reports 27,000 in 1950 and says the Bambara are mixed with Soninke. Their territory has repeatedly been invaded by Soninke migrations, was the seat of struggles between the Soninke and the Malinke, and was later actively colonized by the Bambara. They are mainly scattered among stronger populations, but did have a small state in the 18th century. They are pagans.

Settlement Pattern

The prevailing house type is the cylindrical hut with brick walls and conical thatched roof.

Bibliography

Delafosse, M. Haut-Sénégal-Niger. 3 vols. Paris, 1912. (A very few items).

Urvoy, Y. Petis atlas ethno-démographique du Soudan. Paris, 1942. (A very few items).